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SUBJECT: IRAQ MINISTERIAL PARTNERSHIPS RE-START WATER
FLOWING IN SOUTH RASHIDIYA CANALS, WITH USG HELP

¶1. SUMMARY: In the midst of Iraq's struggles with a crippling drought, the USAID-funded Tatweer and Inma programs have facilitated a partnership between the Ministry of Water Resources (MoWR) and Ministry of Agriculture (MoA) to help secure a rehabilitation budget allotment to keep the water flowing through the South Rashidiya Canals. The South Rashidiya Project, the first inter-ministry, multi-organization approach with the USAID-funded programs Tatweer and INMA and the local Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT), could prove to be a pilot and model for other development projects involving Iraqi Ministries and U.S. assistance. It also underscores Iraqi leadership commitment to capacity-building and solving Iraqi problems.
END SUMMARY.

BACKGROUND

¶2. The problems with South Rashidiya irrigation systems are not new. Water used to flow freely in the area's agricultural canals, serving 4,000 hectares. Deterioration of the irrigation infrastructure, combined with drought and shortage of water supply, has left many of the water channels empty. Extraordinary measures are needed to re-establish what was once considered a robust agricultural community of 700 farms. Natic Joudi, who was an engineer for the Ministry of Irrigation in the mid-1970s and now works with the PRT, explained that the long-time agricultural region was famous for its grains and orchards and populated by farmers who have handed down their land for generations. The project will preserve the region's rich agriculture and traditional way of life.

INTEGRATED ACTION

¶3. USAID/Tatweer advisors, in cooperation with their counterparts at the MoWR and the MoA, helped initiate a field survey and conditional assessment of all the irrigation systems serving the South Rashidiya area. This recently completed survey was conducted by 40 technical staff representatives from the MoWR and the MoA. Trained staff from the MoWR, with assistance from MoA technicians, will utilize an existing Geographic Information System provided under a previous project executed by the Iraq Transition Assistance Office (ITAO) of the US Embassy to process the data gathered by the field survey. The end result will be a report that will clearly identify the maintenance and capital reconstruction effort required to return irrigation water to the area and include capital rehabilitation requirements for South Rashidiya in the MoWR 2009 Budget.

DIFFICULTIES WITH ENERGY

¶4. Although the river's low water flow and the slow

deterioration of the area's irrigation systems are of primary concern, power shortages do have an impact. Currently, power shortages don't allow the canal pumps to keep a consistent enough flow to prevent stagnation in some of the canals, but Iraqi engineers proposed a solution for their ministerial counterparts. Again, with USAID's help, the Ministry of Electricity (MoE) has now joined the partnership and will provide a "dedicated service" of uninterrupted electricity to keep the canal pumps operational despite reduced water levels.

THE TAKE-AWAY

15. The intent is for future surveys to be conducted by the MoWR and the MoA without help from USAID/Tatweer, USAID/INMA, or the Provincial Reconstruction Team, so the Ministries can together provide the targeted assistance needed to reclaim the large areas of deteriorated irrigated agricultural land. This work will enable Iraq to more accurately evaluate the supply and demand requirements for water resources, providing data that will inform Iraq's difficult water negotiations with its neighbors. The MoWR, MoA, and MoE are working hand in hand with USAID and the PRTs to institutionalize this new ministerial capacity both on the technical side and in terms of inter-ministerial coordination and cooperation. This case demonstrates a commitment by Iraqi leadership to solving Iraq's problems. It also demonstrates how integrated USG ministerial assistance is building sustainable Iraqi institutional capacity.

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